

# Town of Brighton Smart Growth Plan

Funded by the  
Adirondack Park Community Smart Growth Grant Program



July 9, 2009

**Prepared for:**  
Town of Brighton  
Franklin County, NY

**Prepared by:**  
F. X. Browne, Inc.  
Saranac Lake, NY

## **Executive Summary**

In 2008, the Town of Brighton received an Adirondack Park Community Smart Growth Grant from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation for a sustainable economic development project. The project was designed to investigate solutions for some of the biggest issues facing Brighton residents: the closure of Camp Gabriels, high energy costs, poor telecommunications access, lack of affordable housing, lack of public transportation, and poor visibility for local businesses. The project included the following activities:

- Review of existing documents
- Key stakeholder interviews
- Community survey
- Brighton Connections tourism brochure
- Brighton business social
- Energy efficiency workshop
- Telecommunications planning
- Land use evaluation
- Smart Growth Plan
- Public Meetings



### Community Survey

Approximately 25 percent of the households in Brighton that were mailed the survey responded. Of the respondents, the vast majority (72 percent) feel that Brighton’s primary “identity” should be “a place to live and work.” The type of economic development that community members listed as most desirable was re-use of existing buildings (51 percent), followed by Camp Gabriels replacement (48 percent), recreation businesses (46 percent), and home-based businesses (44 percent). More information about the community survey is provided in section 1.7 and Appendix B.

### Land Use Analysis

Very little land is available for development within the Town of Brighton. Of the available land, much of it is “land-locked” behind properties along roads, making it inaccessible. However, six key areas have been identified as locations close to existing development centers or prominent intersections with potential for the type of commercial or light industrial development that will bring jobs and economic development to the town. The Town of Brighton should consider implementing town planning to designate these areas as economic development centers. In addition, the town should promote reuse and redevelopment of existing buildings for commercial use. The land use analysis is provided in section 2.0.

### Environmental Assessment

The Town of Brighton has a wealth of environmental assets that attract visitors, scientists, birders, students, and local residents. For example, the town has high-value wetland complexes, an extensive underlying aquifer, quality forest resources, habitat for rare and threatened species, and spectacular rivers, lakes, and mountains for recreational opportunities. Although the town’s environmental resources are largely in good condition, the Town of Brighton should consider

## **F. X. Browne, Inc.**

environmental planning initiatives to protect the town's greatest assets in terms of economic development potential: natural and recreational resources. In particular, the town should pass a conservation subdivision (cluster development) ordinance to ensure that future development protects open space and focuses development in key areas. The environmental assessment is discussed in section 2.3 and maps are provided in Appendix D.

### Business Development/Brighton Connections Brochure

The Town of Brighton has an active business community, the vast majority of which are small businesses. In order to highlight and capitalize upon the town's economic development potential, a tourist brochure, "Brighton Connections" was developed. The goal of the brochure is to attract visitors to the Town of Brighton from the greater Adirondack region, as well as to provide information to visitors that may keep them in the town for additional recreational opportunities, shopping, accommodations, etc. Three thousand full-color copies of the brochure have been printed and are being distributed to local and regional venues such as the Visitor's Interpretive Center, chambers of commerce, museums, hotels, and other locations. More information about the brochure is provided in section 3.4 and a copy of the brochure is provided in Appendix F.

### Telecommunications

A major impediment to economic development in the Town of Brighton is a lack of high-speed Internet and cell phone access in parts of the town. For many residents, the cost of installing high-speed Internet access from the main road to their homes (so-called "last mile" access) is prohibitive. The Town of Brighton should partner with CBN Connect and/or other area telecommunications interests to improve high-speed Internet and cell phone access to town residents, possibly via supporting the installation of a wireless transmitter in a strategic location such as the Adirondack Airport. Telecommunications issues in the Town of Brighton are discussed in Section 4.0.

### Town Planning

Currently, the Town of Brighton has no comprehensive, zoning, or site review plan to guide future development and ensure that development practices within the town are compatible with the town's character and identity. At a minimum, the town should re-establish its site review board and pass a Site Review Plan to allow for review of major developments within the town. The town should also consider implementing a Comprehensive Plan, Land Use Plan or Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance, and Conservation Subdivision Ordinance. Information on planning issues in the Town of Brighton is provided in section 6.0.

### Organizational Capacity

The Town of Brighton has no full-time employees other than Highway Department personnel. The Town Supervisor and the Town Board members are part-time elected officials, and all have other jobs that keep them very busy. The town would benefit greatly from having a full-time Town Manager to keep up with grant opportunities, regional collaborations, and economic development initiatives. At least part of the Town Manager's salary could be paid with grant money, which would provide an incentive to apply for grants.

## F. X. Browne, Inc.

### Action Plan

The following Action Plan summary highlights the most pressing needs in the Town of Brighton in terms of economic development. The Action Plan, timeline, and potential funding opportunities are discussed in section 7.0.

1. Distribute the Brighton Connections brochure widely in the Tri-lakes region.
2. Hire a town manager or town planner to seek grants and advocate for the town's interests within the Adirondack region.
3. Support efforts to find a year-round business to replace Camp Gabriels.
4. Hold monthly Brighton business socials, rotating locations between town businesses, in order to foster connections and collaboration between area businesses.
5. Periodically hold energy efficiency workshops and additional opportunities to provide information to residents about how they can improve their homes and reduce the cost of home ownership.
6. Develop and implement a Site Review Plan.
7. Develop and implement a conservation subdivision ordinance.
8. Apply for a technology grant or stimulus funding in conjunction with CBN Connect and other area towns to build a wireless high-speed Internet transmitter at the Adirondack Airport.
9. Partner with neighboring towns to share services and engage in cooperative purchasing to save money.
10. Encourage year-round economic development in the town, including support for "green jobs."
11. Whenever possible, maintain existing buildings and support historic preservation projects such as the Town Hall renovation. This includes promoting historic preservation easements on public and private properties in the town.
12. Encourage smart economic growth in existing centers such as Gabriels village and other identified potential growth areas.

